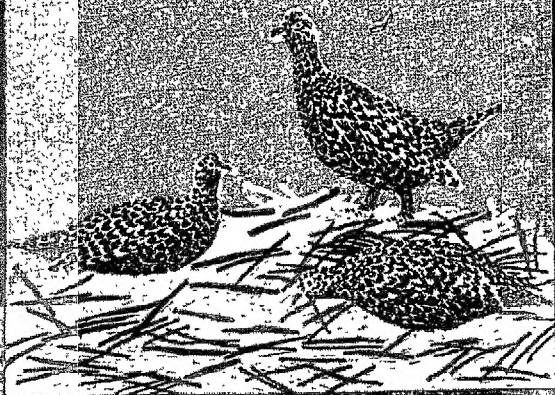


PRAIRIE PATCHWORK

CECIL E. SELWYN



PRAIRIE PATCHWORK

OR
WESTERN POEMS
FOR
WESTERN PEOPLE

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By
CECIL E. SELWYN

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Introduction

Now here are no rhymes erotic,
Look not for literature lewd,
These verses are quite unfashionable
And you won't see anything rude.
You will read no yarns about Heaven,
Not likely I ever was there;
I never was in a gambling den,
For I haven't the cash to spare.
I'm not much tickled on "tanglefoot",
There's my job to keep you see,
And when the "booze" hies to the head
It sometimes spoils your spree.
With no mimic mortgage on Kipling
I've a wilful way of my own
Of taking more license in rhyming
Than any chump ever was known.
I'm a muff at making metre,
But at least my rhymes are clean,
And your daughters' checks won't flame, Sirs,
Like red roses I have seen.
Verse vile as a vomiting vulture,

Profane as a Billingsgate hag,
Why, if you are looking for that,
Your interest may flag.
I sing of no moral leprosy,
Tho' sometimes of wrong and of death,
But I give you the bird and the flower,
And I bring you the Prairie's breath.
If I speak in phrases unpolished
The people I paint were so,
And it's no use making a sketch
If the outline's untrue, you know.
So this warning I give to you others.
Whose verses surpass mine by far:
You may not touch poetical pitch
Without spreading the taint of its tar!

CECIL E. SELWYN.



THE WILD GESE

THE WILD GEESE.

Where are they going, these wide-winged birds?

Traversing swiftly the azure blue,

With Cach-Cach! Kek-Kek! and Honk-o-Honk!

~~Or ever the grass is green in hue,~~

To northern seas where the walrus swims

And the white bears fight and growl,

While cliffs resound both night and day

With the clang of the wild sea fowl.

With Cach-Cach! Kek-Kek! and Honk-o-Honk!

Saying stern winter has flown,

They go on the breath of the warm Chinook

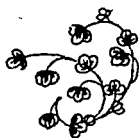
To nest in the Arctic Zone.

They fly from the banks of the warm lagoon

Where the white pond lilies blow,

Thro' the shine of the sun and the gleam of the moon

To the realms of eternal snow.

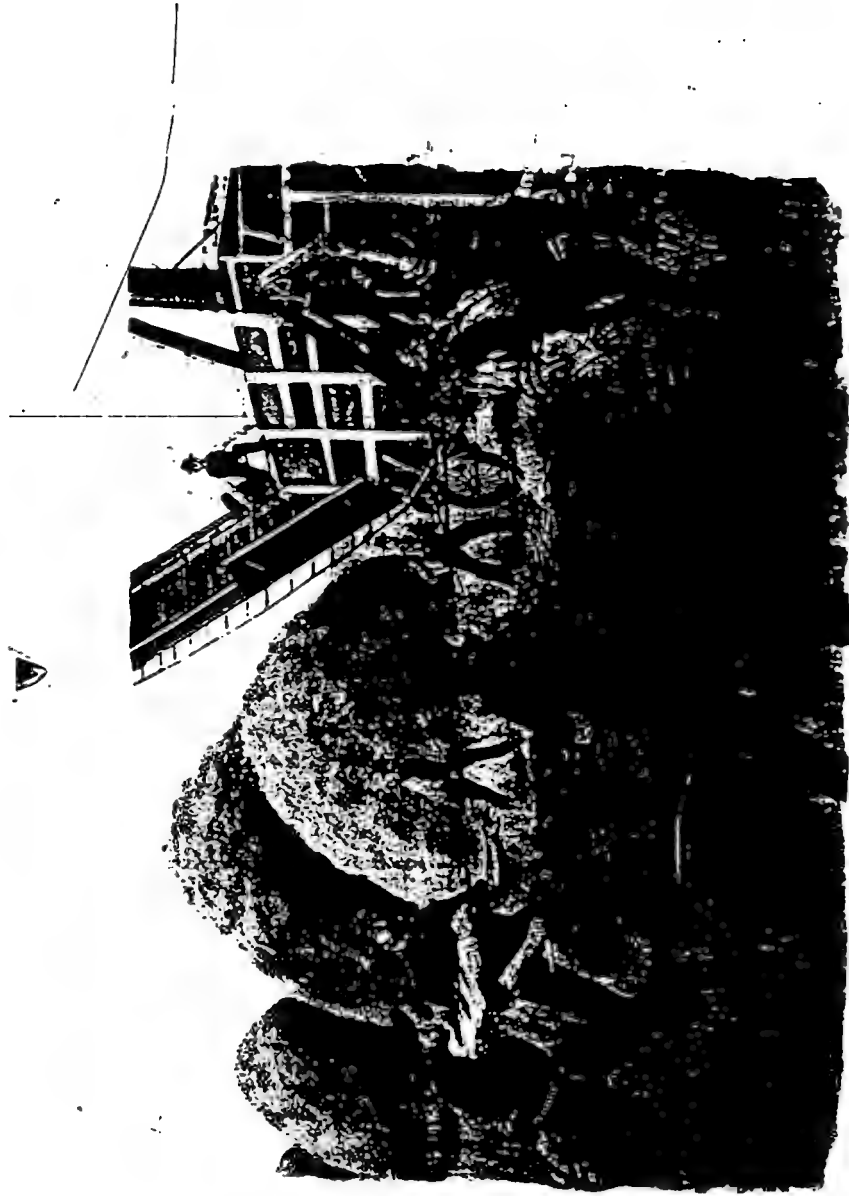




The muskrats have builded their dwelling
And piled it up high in the fen,
Stern winter is coming, it's telling,
So hunt up your fur coat again.
The geese in long lines have gone southwards—
Away down to Mexico's shore:
'Twill be long months before they fly backwards
To reach Manitoba once more.
Well lined with dry leaves is the bear's den,
Of acorns this fall he'd no lack;
Yet last week he was out at my hog-pen,
And I hope he may never come back.
In the shelter the humpy-backed cattle
Stand dreaming of pasturage thick;
On account of the wet I'd a battle
To save enough hay for a rick.
Round my straw-stack the chickens crowd fearless:
They ought to be getting quite fat—

For the boys at the threshing were careless,
Wasting more than sufficient for that.
Now, hurry and raise a high wood pile
Ere February buries the slash;
For in wood, hand-to-mouth is a bad style,
And with green your wife won't make good hash.
The moon had a halo last evening—
~~We soon may be looking for snow,~~
The pump was fast frozen this morning:
It soon will be forty below!





THE BALLAD OF A CRIME

THE BALLAD OF A CRIME

(A true story).

One morning in October, here in the Great Nor'-West.
Among the golden sheaves some threshers rose from rest,
At three got up the fireman, rubbing sleepy eyes,
And hurried down thro' stubbles where the coyote cries;
Low-set, strong and sinewy, with red beard and eyes of blue,
~~He was a French-Canadian, his father's name Larue;~~
He'd not lain in linen like Dives of olden time,
Nor slept on downy eider in this our frosty clime.—
His bed had been the straw pile, his pillow sheaves of oats,
Covered scantily over with two goatskin coats.
Their odor wasn't lavender, nor were they lined with silk.
But daintiness ne'er was hereditary in any man of his ilk.
Perhaps he thought of mother as he lay in the stubble
ground,
But more likely he dreamt of euchre, turning sleepily
'round.
The boss will use rough language, if he is not on time.
So briskly from the wheat-straw his boots they brush the
rime.
His overalls carry patches; his coat is ragged and old,
He searches for his matches and chafes his hands so cold.
He tries to light the fire but the match goes out,
So on his knees by the engine he blows the ashes about,
Till at last the straw is flaring as the sheaves slide in,
And brightly the blaze is glaring on his features thin.
In the western heavens Orion's star is setting,
But he looks not at the planets as high the gauge is getting.
At four he blows his whistle and banks the fire down.
Then hurries to the farmhouse across the furrows brown.
His mates are eating breakfast, a not over cleanly crew,
But hoboos use no bath tubs, nor among such men would
you.

A tall gaunt man is the feeder, with sinews like twisted steel,
And a mouth like to a badger's, as he bolts his morning meal.

His eyes glare like a tiger's, when it crouches for the prey,
And, beginning his breakfast, he never a grace doth say.

His hands are big and dirty, like the paws of a grizzly bear,
And he uses ugly fingers, the tough steak to tear.

The crew are of all nations,—From Canadian unto Russ,

Mostly the scum of creation, with ways unknown to us.

But at that homely table sits a lad with a face like Christ,

And to eat he seems unable, e'en where the food's high-priced;

His hair is like the tassels wound about Indian corn;

His eyes are as the azure of a blue day newly born.

Slim as willow sapling, graceful as waving reed,

Surely from those about him he is of different breed.

For his smile plays like the ripples that flutter a still pond,

When gentle southern breezes stir green reeds beyond;

And with slender fingers and shapely hands of white,

'Mongst the faces round him his glows like a star so bright.

But the whistle screams for working, as shines the rising sun,

So the men have finished eating and passed out one by one;

But the boy pays no attention to the shrill warning scream.

And sits with drooping eyelids as one lost in a dream.

When in comes the French fireman, that hearty boy Larue,

With face like a red apple and eyes sincere and true:

"Com dites moi donc brave garçon, why seet you lak you sick,

Vous savez Ezra plaintee scold, if you not be so quick.

Steam, it jus' a-hummin' an' cylindare she's growl,

You bes' com bien vitement or dat cochon raise a howl.

Tak' you good, sharp sickle, Dat fool Swede pitch your table,

An' he trow ver,' ver,' careless, so cut de bes, you able,

An' no cut de hand, for Ezra angry tres mal bete,

De wagon jus' soon comin', no need you be ver' late."
The boy takes up the sickle's thong and binds it on his wrist,
Then bounds away o'er stubbles long, thro' white morning
mist.

He climbs up onto his bandstand beside the flying belt,
Ah, little his mother knew his fate as that morn in prayer
she knelt!

And my heart grows cold as I try to tell

Of the terrible fate which then befell,

As the sheaves from the gleaming pitchforks flew.

And over the stubbles the south wind blew.

When a sheaf drops crooked, the sickle gleams.

From the feeder's rough hand the red blood streams.

The boy turns pale as he sees the blood.

And his hand is stained with its crimson flood:

The big hobo grins with an evil sneer,

And turns with an oath to the engineer.—

"Put on that steam just all you've got,

This cussed wheat is heavy as shot."

The engine puffs, as the fire flares,

The cylinder empties, yet still he stares—

The greedy teeth are whirling 'round

Like some fierce boar's that cleave the ground.

Dear God! Forgive the awful truth.

He turns and seizes that fragile youth,

With a horrible curse he swings him high.

In those cruel teeth to be rent and die!

That Christ-like head to the cylinder brought,

Quick as a thought the murder's wrought!

Oh merciful Lord; I draw the veil,


I would it were false, this terrible tale.

The crew stand silent in dread surprise.

Then "Scélerat bête", the Canadian cries.

Swing up those carriers ver' mooch higher!

This man no good! Judge Lynch fine squire!



There's a rough Montana cowboy who not one word has said,
But in his sinewy fingers he coils a lasso's thread.

The murderer glares all round him, like a big black wolf at bay,


When the gaunt, angry staghounds have chased him all the day.

There are knives, pitchforks and pistols, he knows he dare not move,

He but trails his nervous fingers in the table's blood-stained groove.

That cowboy steps behind him, the noose flies whizzing out.
And backwards from the separator he falls with choking shout.

They drag him to the carriers befouled with human gore,
And as they swing him upwards the heavens with thunders roar:

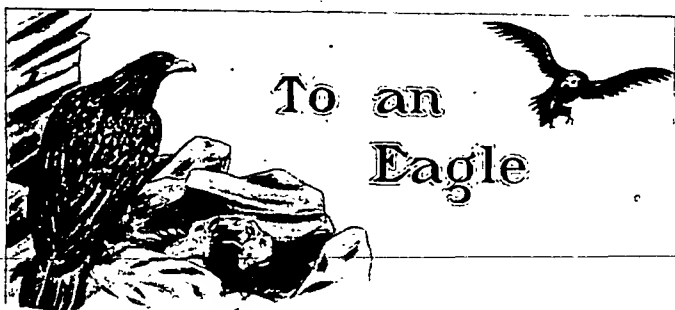


So it seemed as if the dear God were angry with the earth,
When on that October morning such awful crime had birth.
But though I shudder with horror, thinking of the blood,
Perchance for his soul it was better, and from evil cometh good:

For he died a pure-hearted martyr, and surely 'twas better for him,

Than his clean-speaking lips had been sullied, and the soul in his eyes grown dim.

We shiver at his torture and unparalleled stands the crime.
But in heaven that face shall be seraph-like and its smile shall endure for all time.



Thou bird of Jove
That circlest the sun above—
With claws and beak blood red,
 Insatiate of gore—what canst thou know of love
And yet on yonder cliff, high beetling o'er the wave,
Branches and weed you piled in rude confusion
 Until a nest was shaped where downy eaglets cower.
And so the boyish god had power
To tame e'en thee
Whose cruelty transcends belief,
And make thee form a home.



THE COUNTRY DANCE

THE COUNTRY DANCE.

Now Farmer Brown has shingles piled,
It's working weather—fine and mild,
So roof my gran'ry high and wide,
I'll give a dance whate'er betide.
Boys, they gather hammers and nails.
~~Pie-pastry with the cook prevails:~~
With busy hands they sheeting tack
Across the rafter's gaping crack.
Shingles, swiftly they lay them on,
As feathers closely cloak a swan.
Before nightfall the floor is clean,
The news all 'round the township been.
To view his roof old Brown he goes;
See, Jim and Jack in best of clothes,
A rank cigar beneath each nose,
In buttonhole a big red rose.
The sawdust all away has blown,
The wide barn door is open thrown.
Each girl has got her Sunday gown
With new shirt waist from distant town.
The violins are tuning now—
Just see that fellow make his bow.
It's Forward Four! A la main left!
The widow seems not much bereft.
Now in a waltz they gaily go
And now they schottische to and fro;
Now cotillion, then quadrille—
He kicked her toe, that gawky Bill!

A square dance now with ladies chain,
Round, round they swing again, again.
It's now a polka, heel and toe,
See on her cheeks the roses glow.
With merry joke and laughter shrill,
Of pie and cake they eat their fill.
Now chassez left and drossidos,
Sée! Miss Maloney with her bean.
Why bless me heart! Day is dawning,
It's four o'clock, Friday morning.



THE REMITTANCE MAN



At home I was a gentleman,
Out here I'm "stony-broke,"
And it's deucedly unpleasant
To wear a workman's yoke.
The cheque I was expecting,
The guv'nor didn't send,
And these dollars go so swiftly
They're not like pounds to spend.
I haven't had my breakfast!
And my pipe, it's empty, see!
So if you've got a "five-spot"
You'll kindly lend it me.
Dad will cash up presently,
He always does, you know,
And a chappie cawn't go hungwy
When it's forty-two below.



A BUFFALO BONE

A BUFFALO BONE.

A dry, bleached bone among the grasses cast,
The relic of a time long past—

When herds of elk and bison thronged the plain.

And Indian hunters twanged not bow in vain.

Gone are those days, forever passed away,

Upon the knoll the white man's children play,

Where the fierce bulls once bellowed, gored and trod:

Now the sharp breaking plow throws back the sod.

And where the lodges by the coulee stood,

The freight trains bear a nation's food.





The Sheriff

Bill's a big and burly fellow,

In buff breeches and knee-boots,
With a brow broad as a bulldog's,
Though not gifted at Greek roots.
He's a butternut brown moustache,

A serious, sleepy, soft, blue eye:

Sallie Smith she says he's surely

Silky sweet as syrup pie.

He lies lolling by the window
With long legs up on the sill,
And he's looking languid-lazy;
But you'd better do no ill.

You may think you are a bad man—

A white wolf from way way back,
But if you're seeking safety, Sir,
You'll stick to the straight track.
For he sports a slick six-shooter,
And it's certain should he shoot,
Though you may scarce believe me.
You'll sink a sick galoot.
So pinch no prairie property,
Brand no buncoed broncho bunch,
Or you bet, behind the bars, Boy.
A convict's crust you'll crunch.



The Commercial Traveller

Don't call him "Drummer,"
That's a scornful name:
This fitting fellow—
If its all the same
To you—is bone and sinew
Of our western land, sir!
And, when you use
A title of contempt, you err!

He's harum-scarum,
Easy-going ways,
Sometimes. But then you must admit
He always pays;
And money
Money talks.
Ah! here change ears! I'm bound, sir,
For Uncle Sam's Grand Forks.



THE ELK

THE ELK.

Come get your rifles!
A house, it stifles;
Such bright, October weather—
Wake up! Wake up! Let's hunt together
Across the dales
And marshy swales,
Where elk and deer delight to browse
Our firing shall the echoes rouse.
We'll wake the grim bear in his den:
We'll scare the gray geese from the fen.
By noon we'll reach that trickling fountain
Underneath the wooded mountain.
There with keen zest, we'll eat our lunch.
Where cranberries hang in crimson bunch.
The mellow air shall act as wine—
We'll frolic home like frisky kine.
Follow this cowpath! The cattle know
The easiest way to the valley below.
See how thick the poplars stand,
Where the blue jays chatter, a fluttering band.
And there the stag last night at dark
Chafed his horn on the willow's bark.
Diana! smile upon our fate,
Our turning home need not be late;
For yonder they stand, a band of nine,
The leader a monarch with branching tine,
Yearlings, does and a spike-horn buck,
With a fawn that stoops its mother to suck.

Down, Down in the brush they nearer come:
Now hold your rifle with steady thumb—

Ho what a leap! That ball struck home.

And the stag lies dead 'neath the forest dome.

Look at that doe how high she bounds;

Your elk will weigh six hundred pounds.

A pity he's killed? Well, perhaps 'tis so;

But then, we must have meat you know.

So bind your kerchief on this spray

To scare the ravening wolf away.

And we'll go home and bring the cart.

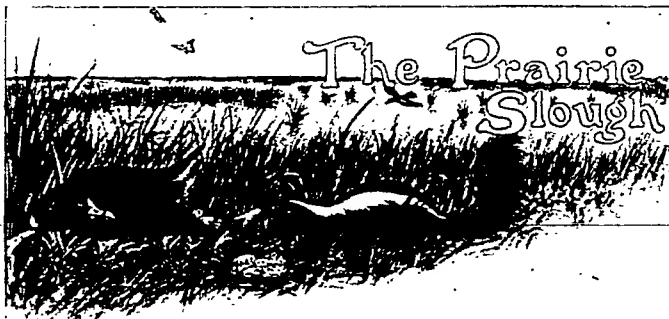
And you'll have venison for the Mart.





It's thronged with every sort of man:
Electric lights aglare;
A bookstall, and musicians—
A funny, foreign pair.
What's that? The latest? Rainbow?
I don't quite catch the air.
And see, the vaudeville artiste
Comes tripping down the stair!

Here are city swells and "dead-beats,"
A millionaire or two,
And in beyond, the bartenders
All stylish drinks do brew!
It's sociable and cosy,
But don't linger though it tempts;
For decency says: do not loaf,
And her law no one exempts.



The crane and the mallard, they nest by its side,
And o'er its green sedges black sea swallows glide.
The coot and the pintail splash, flutter and dive,
While mosquitoes hum round it as in a hive.
Here, wandering northward, drops down the wild swan,
And gray gulls are floating its still pool upon.
The skunk and the muskrat are here to be found,
With ring-plovers piping its margin around.
In the grass by its edges the blue gentian blooms
'Mong cottontails woven by magical looms.
Here 'mid fragrant flowers, the field mouse it plays,
While on purple vetches fleet jackrabbits graze.
Here, skims the marsh hawk in search of the frog,
And white-blossomed arrowhead blooms in the bog.
Here the blackbird he builds with his red shouldered wings,
And nigh to his dwelling the meadow-lark sings.
Here, are pink-petaled roses blushing so fair;
Blue dragonflies painted like gems that are rare.
The grasshoppers dance and big butterflies flit,
Or resting themselves in the red lilies sit.
It's kissed by the sun and fanned by the breeze.
And surely God made it, Prairie fairies to please.

The Black Sheep



At home, to play cards and shoot pheasants,
Sir Lionel won't let him stay,
So, a stone by the builders rejected,
He is sent from old England away !
And you find him out here on the prairies
Facing their forty below:
He is talking of going to Klondyke
To pick up gold out of the snow.
He's content if I give him a pony
And find him but little to do,
I might just as well let him be idle,
For his work wouldn't fill an old shoe.
You know you have plenty of cattle;
You're the best man to give him a job.
Could she see her son as a cowboy,
Why My Lady, his mother, would sob.
But send him right out on your ranges,
And don't let him get at the dice:
Also keep him away from the whisky,
For when drunk he is not very nice.
To keep him at home with my youngsters
The wife says it never would do,
And she generally gets her own way, Sir,
So I'm handing him over to you.



THE FATE OF JACK JOHNSTON

THE FATE OF JACK JOHNSTON

What! you never heard of Jack Johnston?

Why you are behind the times;

But then you were off in Africa

Fighting in distant climes.

~~But I'll tell you the tale as well as I can,~~

As it was told to me:

How out in this land of Alberta

From the sheriff Jack Johnston did flee.

'Twas a soft, spring night, the air was sweet,

The ranchman's work was done,

And away far off in the rosy west

Was fading the setting sun.

Jack Johnston sat on the barn-door step

Smoking a big cigar;

The wind it blew thro' his yellow moustache

And carried the scent afar.

And Johnnie he was a western youth,

So brawny and strong was he;

For he'd toiled as a boy from morn till night,

And that brings muscle you see.

So supple and tall, blue-eyed and fair,

He nothing on earth did fear

Raised from a boy in our great Nor'-West.

As wild as a raging steer.

So when Norman Carr stepped up to him,

And called him a liar out plain,

He rose to his feet and showed his teeth.

And dared him to say it again.

Now Norman had sipped of the tanglefoot.

Or else he had thought some more
Ere he cast the scornful word at Jack,

Where he stood by the barn door.
But he said it again, with an added name
Too foul for me to repeat,—

Jack Johnston's fist it falls like a sledge

And Norman lies at his feet!

Then stepping swift from the house near by

Comes a fair woman clothed in white.

And round the barn and into the mow

She peers with a lantern bright.

First Norman, then Jack, she calls full sharp.

Jack answers her not a word,

But stands and stares at the man at his feet,

As though he never had heard.

She comes up close, and the lantern's gleam

It falls on a dead man's face;

She casts herself down with a wailing cry,

And weeps and kisses apace.

Jack Johnston steps in silence away—

And leaves her alone with her dead—

His face is stern, his head is bent,

His heart is heavy as lead;

For the mark of the angry Cain of old

Seems branded in red on his brow,

And he thinks of what the Justice will say

When he hears of the murderous row.

But the bronchos are standing beside the smudge,

So he bridles a sorrel mare;

While the woman low in the prairie dust
Dishevels her golden hair.
He steps inside the stable door.
And grasps a gleaming spur,—
The sorrel will wonder why to-night
So cruel he is to her.
~~But she'll carry him swiftly and carry him far:~~
And carry him till she's dead lame
Ere he gives himself to the hangman's noose—
For the slur on a mother's name.
So he fixes the saddle and tightens the cinch.
And vaults up onto her back,
While he warns the staghound to go and lie down
Lest it follow his fugitive track.
Then the sorrel bounded over the grass
Out into the twilight gray
And away like a dart past the great corral
Where the dead man's cattle lay,
And on they go in the starlight pale
Where the prowling coyotes bark,
Thro' meadow and coulee and deep ravine
And wooded prairie park:
Till at dawn of day they are miles away
Down in Montana's state,
And Jack Johnston begins to think that he
Has outwitted the finger of Fate;
So little he dreams that his soul that day
Shall stand at the bar of God;
And his handsome face and manly form
Be tramped in the prairie sod.

He's crossing a ranching country,
No human being seems near:
So feeling the pangs of hunger,
Some beef he must steal 'tis clear.
It's early in June and young calves there are
'Mongst the cattle wandering there:

Let a dead one be found all bleeding and torn,
Why then 'twas the work of a bear;
For the grizzly roams in the great ravines
Which span this prairie state,
And his ursine form and his horrible claws
The ranchmen fear and hate.

But horse's hoof prints must not be seen.
So he tethers the mare to a bush,
And then thro' the sagebrush silv'ry and tall
His way begins to push.
Now he certainly knew 'twas a desperate game
The roping a calf on foot,
Or did he prefer to be gored by beasts
Ere a mob at his hanging should hoot.
Ah! - there one lies asleep in the sun,
And no cow appears to be near—
His noose flies out, and the lithe young beast
In vain doth struggle and rear,
But, alas and alas for Jack Johnston
It raises a bellowing moan,
And up and away from the banks of grass
Come the horns to its rescue flown.
The angry herd come surging on,
With thunder of hoof and gleam of horn

Relentless and grim as a curling wave
On raging Atlantic tempest born!
The bulls are fierce, the cows are wild,
As Montana's cattle are—
Oh! horror of horrors, he's crushed and torn!
And the red blood spurts afar.

The prairie flowers are stained with gore.
The grass is trampled down;
The handsome head is a thing of dread
Crushed in the prairie brown!
The calf has trailed his lasso away,
The sorrel she stands and waits,
But her rider is torn to pieces
For the buzzards to serve as baits;
And the wide-winged harpies sailing come
Floating high up in the blue;
And that night the gaunt, gray wolf did growl
Where the grass was red in hue.
So next day when the sheriff came riding up
And with him companions ten,
Of what they found of Jack Johnston
They don't want to find again.
They gazed a moment and rode full swift
Away from the ghastly scar.
And that was how Fate took revenge
For the killing of Norman Carr.



JACK'S SHANTY.

We are living in a shanty, Jack and I,
 The walls are built of unhewn logs, exactly six feet high,
 With one window in the south; the roof it is of sod,
 I presume; if you should see it, you'd think it rather odd.
 All day it has been raining, and the roof begins to leak,
 I fear if it continues Jack will profanely speak.
 He's sleeping at this moment, but it's dripping on the bed,
 I wonder if it presently will drip upon his head.
 It's raining even harder—it's pouring on the floor,
 Till I think 'twill make a river, it's source to be our door.
 I think of dear old auntie—Great Scott! how she would
 stare

Could she see her dearest nephew in such a pickle rare.
A cowboy's life is not all jam, as you may understand,
But you need not think by this, old man, I mean anything
underhand.

My boss, puts up what's called good grub: you might not
think it such.

Indeed, I doubt if most of you'd condescend to touch.

Did you ever eat a "Dough-God" fried in bacon fat. I
wonder?

For if you did, I wish I'd heard the words you said, by
thunder!

But no, you never ate one, nor never will I guess.

If ever you are offered one I'll whisper, don't say yes.

There be better things where you are than flapjacks be I
ween,

Finger-bowls and flowers with damask's silv'ry sheen,

Not to mention the comestibles with which you cloy your
taste.

But there, I'd better make an end, nor letterpaper waste

For I'm out here in the west a cowboy's life to lead.

And presume that I have everything that such a "cuss"
should need.



The Homestead

20 Years
later

A wide, low house 'mid sheltering trees,
Flower beds thronged with buzzing bees;
The gray-beard owner of the farm
Leans on the gate with wearied arm;
Watchdog by the door-step sleeping.
Dreams he sees a rabbit leaping.
Grandma on the porch is sitting
Dozing o'er some snowy knitting.
Black Minorcas busy scratching,
Wondering who will do their hatching;
Sparrows through the bushes flitting,
Fluttering round with endless twitting.
Polly working at her churning—
Easter gown she thinks of earning.
Neighbor's wife as soft as silk
Come to beg some buttermilk.
Brahma hen with fifteen chickens—
Clucking, clucking like the Dickens.
Far overhead a hawk is sailing,
So guinea hen is loudly railing;
Tyrant gander standing screaming

Where the goose on eggs sits dreaming.

Peacock with his tail outspread—

You rascal! that's the onion bed.

See turkey gobbler proudly strut,

Where his mate in coop is shut.

Pigeons on the barn roof cooing—

Cooing, cooing,—their mates wooing;

White ducks dabbling in the mud,

Where spotted cows they chew the cud.

By the hay mow lies the sow,

Ten wee pigs come squealing now.

In the straw yard sleepy sheep,

See the frisky lambkins leap.

Chore boy going to feed the calf

Growls,—he's too much work by half.

To broody hens blithe Polly pegs

With 'an apron full of eggs.

Plowboys sitting without coats,

Where tired horses munch their oats.

In the west low sinks the sun:

Home the straying yearlings run;

In distant tree tops hoots the owl,

To roost have gone the noisy fowl.

Polly milking seven cows,

Men are lazy so she crows:

Through the barnyard frisks the cat:

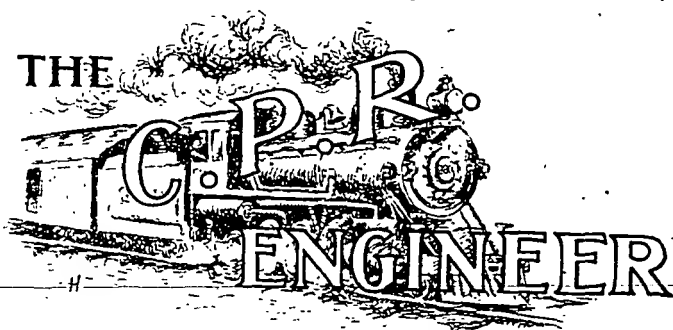
In deepening darkness wheels a bat.

Grandma rises—lights the lamp:

Warns the boys against the damp.

Now the stable doors close tight—

The day's work done—Good-night! Good-night!



With dusty face, and strong and steady hand,
He swiftly steers his snorting, steaming steed
Along the bright steel band
Which joins our sunny land
To the shining sea!

And clothed in blue overalls is he !
He's a wife and child in Winnipeg City,
And he thinks,

With eyes full of coal dust gritty,
Of his baby's head
In her soft white bed.

But far to the eastward his dear ones be!
And in coarse cotton clad is he;
We are human freight,
In this sleeper behind.

Still his nerves are iron, so never mind,
But only pray, that the Fates be kind—
As far to the west, through the night we flee—
To the man in the greasy suit, Siree!

No tailor made coat!

What does that matter?

As on our windows the hail stones patter

Hark! how the wheels of his mogul clatter,

On the downward grade.

A grimy trade?

Yes, perhaps that's so,

But then you know,—

Wore he white linen like you, you see!

Our wide, west land, what would it be?



CANADA'S



River! river! tiny river

Trickling, trickling o'er white sand,
Where the thirsty deer are drinking;
Passing through a pleasant land.

River! river! winding river !

Twisting like a shepherd's crook,
Ever flowing, ever growing,
Fed by streamlet and by brook.

River! river! rippling river !

Dancing, dancing in the sun,
Over banks bestrewn with boulders
Where the ring-neck plovers run.

River! river! faster running—

Splashing, splashing o'er the stones,
Where the kingfisher sits dreaming,
And fox cubs gnaw rabbits' bones.

River! river! eddying now

Thro' low banks with flowers gay,
Where the wild ducks splash and flutter
And sleek, sportive otters play.

River! river! gleaming river!

Gliding, gliding swiftly by
Under pine trees' lofty branches,
Where crows' callow nestlings cry.

River! river! roaring river!

Thund'ring, thund'ring down thy fall,
Drifting onward many pine logs
Hewn from out the forest tall.

River! river! rushing river!

Going boiling past the mills,—
Where the steamboat brings big barges,—
Floating by the wooded hills.

River! river! quiet river!

Flowing, flowing ever down,
With wide rafts upon thy waters
Bound toward the distant town
River! river! mighty river!
Surging, surging neath thy bridge,
White-winged vessels warping seawards
Past high bank and barren ridge.

River! river! foam-capped river!

Rolling, rolling swiftly on
'Till you merge in ocean's bosom,
As fades in air some sweet song.
River! river! Canada's stream!

Passing skiffs and stranded wreck,
By Brockville and fair Montreal,
Ever down past old Quebec.

THE VENDETTA



VENDETTA.

By the lofty Rocky Mountains,
Where the cattle and bronchos range,
A cowboy rides at the close of day
To the door of a dwelling strange.
'Tis only a dug-out hut,
Yet over its lowly door
Is nailed a human skull;
And a dark stain sullies the floor.


Now that young man comes of a family
That knows no fear from the breast,
But yet at his very heart-strings
He shivers with vague unrest:
For is he not seeking his brother.
A sheep whose fleece was black,
There's a little round hole in the gleaming bone,
And he dreams of the pistol crack.

For those were days when might was right
And "lynch" was the only judge,
Yet that cowboy mutters impatiently:
"Now why should I think of such 'fudge'";
For Jack he ever was lucky,
And 'the devil takes care of his own,'
And, although they don't always deserve it,
That proverb is widely known.

I promised his mother I'd find him,
And bring him safely home,—
So I reckon I'll keep that promise
If to distant Alaska I roam!
Then striding up from the canon
Comes the owner of the hut
With dark hair tossed and tangled,
And skin as brown as a nut.

He is gaunt and tall and savage
Like a lonely, grizzly bear,
And he frowns as he asks that rider
To tell him his business there.
The young man keeps his temper,
Though he feels his cheeks grow hot:
"I come to ask a night's lodging,
For nothing to eat I've got."

My name it's William Cranston,
And I look for my brother Jack;
And why do you hang yon ghastly bone
Over the door of your 'shack'?"
A flash comes from the ranchman's eyes,
As from the flint the spark,
And, with a stammering welcome,
He enters that dwelling dark.



Bill Cranston tethers his broncho,
And follows his gloomy host;
But, tacked on the wall is a photo,
And he sees his brother's ghost!
He looks with questioning glances
At the dark and savage man,
Who, gripping a bright revolver,
Thus at length to speak began.

"Your brother shot my nephew
In this same lonely hut,
And his bones the coyotes gnaw them
Down by the canon's rut.
Come out into the open,
I see you've got a gun,
And you shall follow Jack Cranston,
And the wolves shall have more fun."

"Well, that's as may be, Mister,"

Young Cranston says with a smile,
For I'm tolerable good at my shootin',

On that you can bet your pile.

Then he turns out through the doorway

And a bullet goes 'ping' in the wood:

His right hand flies up swiftly,

And, ye Gods! his aim was good!

For his foe has a hole in his forehead,

And again is stained the floor,

So he passes out softly and slowly,

And lifts the white skull from the door!

Then a thought it suddenly strikes him,

And he lays it down again;

While from his bright blue eyes,

Of tears, there falls a rain.

From the dry and tindery doorpost,

Of shavings, he whittles a heap;

And, taking a match from his pocket,

The cremating flames high leap.

Then, hungry and thirsty and tired

He mounts his broncho again,

And rides away—slowly, backward

Over the moonlit plain.

And as in the distance behind him

That funeral fire glows red,

His memory turns to his mother,

And the lone unshriven dead.



Willow bush

Willow bush! Willow bush!
Throne of the thrush,
Robed in golden bloom,
The weft of a fairy loom:
The weavers are belted bees
Sailing over the trees—
Buzzing! buzzing! from spray to spray;
Floating back to the hive away.
Borne on zephyrs fleet,
Laden with woven sweet,
The woof has a golden thread,
Like the quill of yon woodpecker fled
From her nest in the old oak tree.
Thy secret prythee tell me !
Thy secret prythee tell me !
Erstwhile buried in snow,
Thy story I fain would know.

The shuttle's the brown bee's tongue
Delving the pollen among!
The web it is amber honey
Woven when skies are sunny!
But who built the fairy loom?
Whence comes thy golden bloom?
The willow bush answers me never a word,
Perchance! Perchance! It is telling the bird!
Willow bush! willow bush!
The cool of the thrush!
Answers me never a word?
Ah yes! To the soul of the bird!
Yes! Yes! To my lover the bird!





He's a peach from Piccadilly—
Johnnie Blow;
And one or two small things
He'd like to know—
Does the grass get green in "summtah"?
And does it always snow?

He's a collar and an eyeglass,
With a very little cap,
And you'd think he'd only recently
Forsaken mama's lap;
And he's got an awful appetite
For such a tiny chap.

We do not hitch our horses
To plow handles in the west,
But he thought they were the shafts,
And he did his level best;
He'd the temper of an angel,
Still it didn't stand the test.

For, of course, he didn't quite succeed,
And, perhaps, it was as well,
That his wages for the day
His pocket did not swell,—
For what the furrows would have been
It puzzles me to tell.

I told him to drive slowly
Down the hill,
But his pigmy brain
It comprehended ill,
And he hobbled both my horses:
Now wasn't he a pill?

But he's getting better every day,
And can chop a cord of wood:
And at winning pony races he's exceptionally
good
So some day he'll make a farmer,
And soon it's understood.





(A True Story)

A pretty place, the prairie—
Well, yes, perhaps it is
When its flowers bright are blooming—
Roses, bergamots and lilies;
When in coneflower spangled meadows
Knee-deep the cattle browse,
And merrily sings the milk-maid
Driving home her spotted cows;
When dancing oats and barley
Are waving in the wind,
And the needles of the speargrass
To your woollen socks are pinned.

Or, when the wheat is harvested
And standing in the shock,
And the geese from northern regions
Again begin to flock.
But when the blizzard rages
And drives the stinging sleet,
And the sad belated wayfarer
Has benumbed and frozen feet!

Ah! then it's a different story,
A cruel, cruel place!
And I'll tell you now what happened
In a bygone year of grace:
Down here on the boundary line
Township one, Range seven, West,
'Mongst a few scattered neighbors
Settled on the hill-top's crest.

'Twas in April, and the spring was near.—
We thought the winter past;
For the shadows of north-bound wild geese
On the melting drifts were cast !
The spring-larks they were building
And in their nests were eggs,
So we dreamt of storm and blizzard
That we had drunk the dregs!

'Mongst us dwelt a weary woman
With a family of seven,
And all throughout her dreary life
Toil was the bitter leaven.
And she'd been down to Morden
To buy some summer stores,
'Twas early in the afternoon
She left the merchant's doors
And turned the mules' heads homewards,
She and her eldest son,
Ne'er thinking as she left the town
That her toil on earth was done.

The wind came puffing fitfully
Out of the gray south-east,
Where lay a bank of cloudlets
Looking soft as foaming yeast;
But the snowbirds they were fluttering
Along the winding road,

As though to warn the lazy mules
To hurry with their load.
And down came snowflakes falling,
As white as wings of doves
That nesting in the pigeon house
Are cooing to their loves.

The sinking sun in the west
Glared red like a tiger's eye,
And weirdly from the great ravine
Came the roaming wild cat's cry.
The crows upon the withered oak
Croaked with a warning call.
As along the vale of Pembina
The night began to fall.
And the blizzard it came screaming
As only blizzards can.
While down to the sheltering willows
The fleet jack-rabbit ran.

Louder and louder roars the wind.
And thicker comes the drift;
The mules they get disheartened
And their load but slowly shift.



And still the blizzard rages,
While thicker falls the snow,
Till at last they stand bewildered,
And no farther can they go.
So the sad benighted travellers,
They wander forth on foot,
Trusting that they may find a light
In darkness black as soot.

But then they get divided—
The youth he struggles on;
But the weary, tired woman
Sinks the hard ground upon,—
And Death's white angel came to her
There in the stinging sleet.
And the frozen sod was her bier;
The snow her winding sheet.
They found her on the morrow,
Dead in the sunlight fair,
Cold and stiff there lying.
With the snowdrift in her hair.

Her willing arms were frozen stiff,
On her face was a mask of ice,
But her soul had gone where is no more snow—
To the realms of Paradise.





That Dollar

And so you have been over to Martha's
And say she looks worn out and aged,
Well, indeed, I tell you, no wonder
When with care her heart's ever crowded—
For that dollar.

She's always been scratching and scraping,
And studying how not to spend it,
You might as well pull out her eye-tooth
As ever go ask her to lend it—
That dollar.

If 'twas only an egg she must save it,
I've known her, when baking, divide one,
I'm sure you'll be thinking her stingy,
But, then, don't you know the ten dozen
Meant that dollar

She would stand up a spoon in her tea milk,
And ask me, did I take any cream?
I'd smile to myself and say softly:
If I do it will be in a dream—
Of a dollar.

For with butter at twenty cents selling
To put cream in tea would be "wastry":
And 'twouldn't be making no money—
Unsaving as baking short pastry.
Oh, that dollar!

Christmas Day's just the same as another ;
If she'd turkeys and geese by the score
They all must be packed into market
For dinner she'd have pork and no more
For that dollar.

When her cousin lay cold in the coffin
With two quarters her eyes closing tight,
And nurse going back to the city—
Those quarters the change must make right—
For that dollar!

But the nurse she just bowed and said thank you,
I don't care for no such cash as that,
And so bidding Martha good morning,
Guess she'd funny thoughts under her hat—
About that dollar!

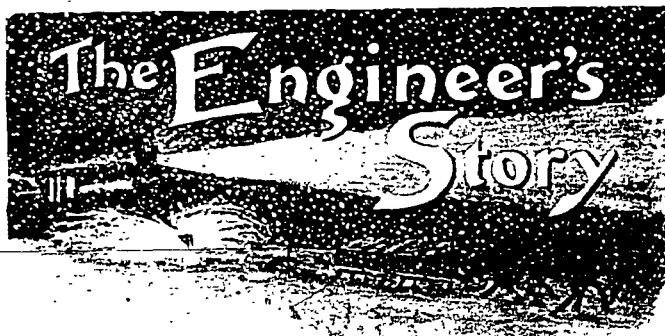
And old Peter the husband's just like her,
He would kill the old cow for home meat;
The thought of them eating a fatling,
It would scare him clean off his two feet—
For a dollar!

If his wheat was but fifty a bushel
He'd chop up the dead things for hen feed;
He'd sooner be risking blood poison
Than he'd chuck 'em some saleable seed—
For that dollar!

I've known Martha—maid, wife and old woman,
And now that she's like to be dying,
I tell you my honest opinion,
The last thing she'll see with eyes closing:
That dollar!



He's an easy-going fellow
With slouch hat and briar pipe,
Brass buttons on his coat, Sir,
On his pants a yellow stripe.
We're an orderly community,
So he hasn't much to do,
Yet still he may get busy
If your honesty's askew.
Should your horses turn up missing
Why you'd better let him know:
For he'll find them when they're stolen
Ere many miles they go.
He rides a frisky pony
Which at least he's got to groom;
I'd like to see him working,
But in thieves there seems no boom.



(A True Story)

I'm plain Augustus Seaton,
Engineer on the C. P. R.,
And whenever you want to find me
There's the superintendent's car.
You'll say I'm slinging hot air, boys,
But this yarn is Gospel truth,
And if you go down by Deloraine
It's there you'll find the proof.
I was always a bit of a chatterbox—
My mate says I'm made of gas.
But you'll say I'm getting prosaic
And so to my story I'll pass.
One night on the road to Napinka
In nineteen hundred and six,
I was running a brand new engine,
And 'twas freezing as hard as bricks;
Soft snow was piled in the cutting,

So the wind was raising a dust
Which nearly choked me whenever
My face through the window I thrust.
I was tired and stiff and frozen,
My fingers were numbed with cold,
And I thought of my baby and home, boys,
As the snow clouds past me rolled.
I was perhaps a little bit sleepy, mates,
But the right of way was mine,
And a sane man's got no business, Sir,
To drive on a railroad line.
But there's always some leaven of madness
Kneaded up with the dough of humanity,
And you needn't go to your lunacy ward
To seek for the yeast of insanity.
So Dave Mitchell could suck up whisky
Like a babe its mother's milk,
And his team of bay bronchos were frisky
With their coats like satiny silk.
And he'd driven down to the mill, boys,
To bring back a grist of flour,
Then started right home ahead of me.
Tho' he knew I was due in an hour.
I was pulling my freight like blue blazes—
Just rushing along the straight track:
Mr. Mitchell must have felt startled.
When I broke through his box at the back.
I felt my cab give a jolt, boys,
But I thought 'twas a risky rail,
Had I really known what happened



I might have turned a bit pale.
For the nigh horse and Dave flew over one fence,
While the off bay I chucked o'er the other,
That I damaged them even the scratch of a pin
I never could yet discover!
That Satan himself took care of his own
On that night was indeed no lie;
And I reckon the same won't happen again
While God's stars shine in the sky.
Dave's flour, I guess, got wasted:
Hard times, that's a sad mistake.
So, don't team grist on the right-of-way
When your wife is wanting to bake.
That's the tale of me, 'Gus Seaton,
Engineer on the C. P. R.,
And if you doubt its truth, Sirs!
Find the Superintendent's car;
For they sued Dave Mitchell for trespass:
And I reckon they won their fine,
So if you like not lawsuits,,
Don't drive on the railroad line.



THE DEAD BEAT.

He's wandering wearily about
In Winnipeg's wide city
And no one asks him what he does,
And none his hunger pity.
Soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor—
Of every trade is he;
But he won't be weaned from whisky,
So he's no use to me.
When he lifts a little lucre
He lives a life unclean;
Had his fathers not been sinners
He might have better been.
But he loafs along life's highway
Listless, lazy and uncertain.
And so he always will be
'Till falls the final curtain.



THE LYNCHING OF DICK HILLIARD.

I heard this tale in Idaho,
You may take it for its worth;
For chaps at times, they lie you know,
And always will, on earth.
But I think Bill Smith was truthful
As such men mostly be,
And he told me, in Montana,
That this thing he did see.
There came two "cusses" from Canada,
And right smart boys they were—
One, dark as a Spaniard,
And the other with golden hair,
Gleaming bright as Klondyke nuggets,
As they rode in the setting sun
And came to old Jack Harris' ranch
Just as the work was done.

And they were driving yearlings—
Quite a sizable band,
And the beasts were mostly heifers
What didn't carry no brand.
They'd a yellow collie with them
Cute as a dozen o' men,
And when the bunch went crooked
They did nothing but just call "Ben."
And they looked honest and handsome
Sitting their bronchos straight,
But yet the speech of the dark chap
Had a sort of ugly grate,
As if he thought that Heaven
Was neither good nor sweet,
And the rest of his fellow mortals
Just like mud beneath his feet.
But the fair boy, he was pleasanter,
With a sort of a laugh in his voice
And he didn't use no "cuss" words
At least not just from choice.
He called the dark man, Dick Hilliard
And himself his brother, Eugene,—
About as different kiddies
As ever on earth were seen.
Dick Hilliard seemed in a hurry
And wouldn't stay for "chuck",
Old gran'ma Harris she looks at the calves
And grunts "Rustled" or my drake's a duck."
But let a man mind his own business.
Why that's ever a golden rule,
And Harris said 'twas drilled into him
Since he was a kid at school.
So when asking them in to supper
They said they wouldn't stop,
He held his tongue in civility

And let the matter drop.
Their yearlings seemed a bit weary,
But mosquitoes hadn't come,
So they passed right on in the moonlight
~~With-only-the-dog-for-a-chum.~~
But next morning, when came riding
About a dozen of men,
And ahead of them Bill Logan,
The foreman at Angel's pen,
Why, we knew what was the matter,
And what they had come about,
As well as you know that spring has come
When you hear the white cranes shout.
"Just wait till I catch Dick Hilliard,
The miserable low-lived thief,
And he shall see how he likes in Hell
To rustle a woman's beef."
'Twas this way spoke Bill Logan,
And told how from Angel's ranch,
They'd stolen the bunch of heifers
Belonging to Amy and Blanche.
You see our work it ran behind
When old man Angel died.
An' we haven't a scratch o' branding
On any yearling's hide.
An' these Canadian "rustlers"
They caught right on to that.
So our beasts are going to the boundary
With a trail as black as a hat.
Then they passed right on in the sunlight,
And we, why we followed along;
For you see we all were curious
To hear the end of the song.
And coming about eleven o'clock,
Why, we saw the thieves were beat:

For we came on the bunch of yearlings
Lying down in the noonday heat.
And when we saw a curling smoke,
Away by the cotton wood bluffs,
~~Why then we knew for certain,~~
That we had caught the "toughs"
They were just climbing their bronchos
When we rode up apace,
And if ever you saw an ugly scowl,
It came on Dick Hilliard's face.
He gave a snarl like a wolf at bay
And raised his pistol up,
But Black Bill's aim was twice as quick
And smash went life's golden cup.
His body swayed slowly downwards
O'er the black broncho's neck,
And it galloped away to the northward
With never a rider to check.
And the collie, it came
With it's snow-white chest,
And it plaintively whined
On his dying breast.
Then it raised itself up
With a long-drawn howl.
And when we came near
It began to growl.
Eugene leaped down from his pony,
And he gave a moaning cry
Like to a new calved heifer
When the timber wolf comes nigh.
And onto his forehead and in his eyes
There came a look of pain,
When here was a snow-white broncho
A-bounding over the plain.
A woman was it's rider,


And it came with a leaping stride,
So we wondered why in such a haste
Towards us she did ride:
When among us came Amy Angel
And outright plain spoke she:
"I think Bill Logan, those beasts are mine,
And I told you this should not be.
If I have what Eugene Hilliard wants,
Why, he can have it you see,
And even to stop this lynching
He can be married to me."
So she looked at Bill, like a wildcat
When you have stolen her young,
And back from her shapely shoulders
Her golden tresses she flung.
But then she drooped her golden head,
And a blush came to her cheek,
As she looked down at the pony
Which with sweat and foam did reek.
And Hilliard looked straight at her,
While a smile played round his mouth
Soft as the chinook breezes
When the geese fly from the south:
"I take you up, Miss Amy,"
And he waved his soft slouch hat.
"I'll make you a right good husband,
These men may be sure of that."
But when she saw Dick Hilliard's corpse
And fainted right dead away.
While Eugene, in the grass beside her,
Knelt and kissed her, where she lay.
Bill Logan, he rode off sheepish
Like a sneakin' panther cat;
And we, why we took Dick Hilliard
Where she saw no more of that.

The white trash turned their "cayuses"
And followed Black Bill away,
While the sinking sun in the west
Began to paint colors gay.
Eugene, I'm sure he felt happy,
As he sat with her head on his knee.
An' I bet you, a handsomer couple
All your days you never did see.
I brought him a flask of water
From a creek that ran near by,
And the rest of you cowboy fellows
To beat my yarn can try.





Here where the reed-bird swings,
And the brown wren sings,
The wild duck builds her nest—
Plucking the down from mottled breast
To raise her little ones
There by the smooth white stones,
Where the reed-bird swings.



Here, where the reed-bird swings,
And preens red-shouldered wings,
A thousand fluttering things come down to drink—
Slaking their thirst where ripples sink
In the white, drifted sand,
Lured by an invisible hand,
Where the reed-bird swings.

Here, where the reed-bird swings,
And wood-pecker to dead boughs clings,
Nods the red columbine:
And snowy bindweeds twine:
The spotted, yellow-shanks,
With plaintive cry flits down the banks,
Where the reed-bird swings.

Here, where the reed-bird swings,
And fairy thistle-down the south wind brings,
Green willows wave
And sunflowers brave

In golden glory stand—
A flower army in the prairie land.
Where the reed-bird swings.

Here, where the reed-bird swings,
And thirsty elk the gadfly stings,
The sluggish turtle swims,
Or basks on the dead limbs
Which prone have fallen on the bank
Among the tufts of sedges rank.
Where the reed-bird swings.

Here, where the reed-bird swings,
And thro' green woods the cow bell rings,
The red-tailed hawk floats round the sky,
While up and down fleet swallows fly.
High in the air an eagle sails,
The feathered tyrant of the dales.
Where the reed-bird swings.

Here, where the reed-bird swings,
And the balm of Gilead it's shadow flings,
In dreamy ease I love to lie
And watch the little fish thro' shallows hie,
With the bright water trickling over pebbles
Making a sleepy tune in fluty trebles,
Where the reed-bird swings.

Here, where the reed-bird swings,
And on the straying fawn the coyote springs,
In water weeds the jackfish lies
~~While float above him gauze-wing dragon flies:~~
And touch-me-nots in orange beauty quiver
Standing like some shy maids beside the river
Where the reed-bird swings.

Here, where the reed-bird swings,
It seems to me the realm of elfin kings,
And here I'd love to stay
Thro' all the languorous summer day;
But hazy in swath brooks not delay,
And so reluctantly I must away
From where the reed-bird swings.



Breeze That Blows

Now I'll sing you a song
Of the wild North-West,
Where the balmy Chinook blows;
Where the antelope bounds,
The buzzard soars,
And blooms the prairie rose.
My song shall tell of a little maid
Who lived in an Indian hut,
With tresses as black as a raven's wing
And cheeks like the hazel nut.
Bonny she was as a briar rose,
And the wild Indian braves,
They called her Breeze that Blows.
Thro' wooded prairie parks,
Where the gray wolf howls and barks,
She would ride and hunt the buffalo.
You need not shake your head and say it was not so,
For she was a maiden of the long ago!
But Breeze that Blows,
My budding western rose:
You've crossed the Great Divide to be
A memory of the past.



THE STAMPEDE

THE STAMPEDE.

(With apologies for a cowboy's uncouth metre)

Did you ever see a herd take fright,
Scared by the flash of the lightning bright,
When with thundering hoofs and moaning bellow
They stampede over the sunflowers yellow?
With tails in air and startled eyes—
Galloping, galloping over the rise?
You didn't? Ah well, you missed a sight
That was well worth seeing—
Those cattle in fright, over the grass and daisies fleeing!
I mind in 1880, longhorned and scraggy Texan breed,
Up from Montana they drove a bunch,
Takin' 'em out here west, to feed.
An' down there where they crossed the river
Out beyond, where the clay shows yellow
A heifer got scared, an' started to bellow,
An' of all the racket to scare a man
I heard it then, when those cattle ran,
An' piled in a heap in that bloomin' river!
By Gosh! to-day, it makes me shiver.
If a painter chap had been there
He'd a-painted a pictur' would make you stare;
For 'twas jus' as cruel a bridge as ever cow ran over, I
vow.

THE STAMPEDE

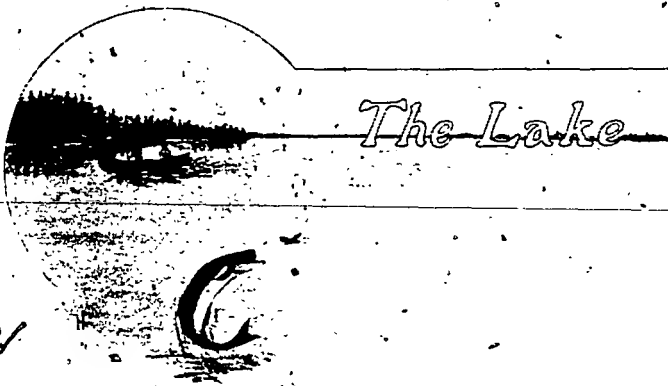


Bah! I turn right sick as I think of it now,
For, or ever that river was piled across,
Three hundred head had gone to loss—
Heifer and steer, hoof and horn—
A ghastly heap in the dewy morn!
Making as awful an' horrid a dam
As ever thro' sluices a jackfish swam;
An' they fed the buzzards for many a day
Till the spring flood swept their bones away.





THE LAKE

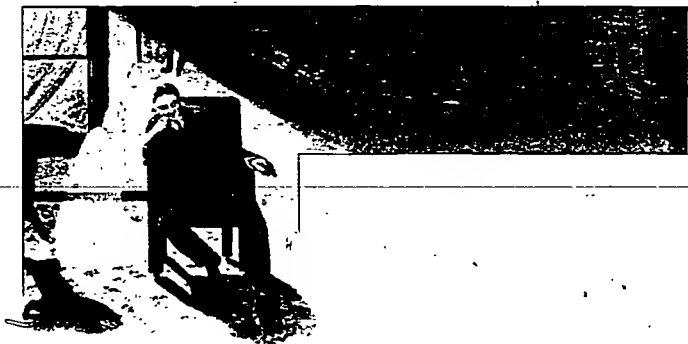


It lies hidden in high hills
Like a pearl within a shell,
And o'er its bosom Indians
Their light canoes propel:
For along its gravel edges
Pass the otter and the mink.
Printing pastry pattern footsteps
Where the brooklet joins its brink.
I stood on its marge at sunset
When the twilight shadows fell,
And loons to their mates were calling
As clangs a resounding bell.
A fish hawk out of the quiet sky
Splashed down for its finny prey,
While the eagle dozed on the cliff side,
As it flapped with its burden away.
A moose came out of the bushes
To drink, with startled eye;



And I watched in circles above me
The whirring night-hawk fly.
A bear patrolled on the beaches;
The lynx in the forest growled,
While over the fallen tree trunks
A tawny panther prowled.
A red fox played 'neath a partridge,
And longed for the toothsome prize;
While a wandering skunk with beady eyes
From her nest made the mud-hen rise.
The wild swan swam with arching neck
Where the trout leaped up for the fly,
And I heard in the marsh behind me
A booming bittern cry.
Then the moon rose in glowing splendor
Above the clouds high piled,
And lit with silver glory
That lake and the mountains wild.





Ah! soul of one that I love,
Thy secret thou well dost keep;
But how dost thou come to be here
Embracing me while I sleep?
I feel thy breath on my hair,
I know that thy lips kiss mine:
And yet there is nobody near,
And cold the moon doth shine.

From sun, or wind, or rain,
Doth thy body lie cold in the grave,
That from taint of the world and its pain
Thou comest my soul to save.
Ah! kiss my soul again.
On earth we meet no more
In its sun, or its wind, or its rain
Though perchance on Heaven's shore.

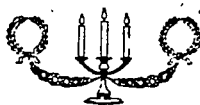


THE DEATH OF MIKE MCGUIRE

THE DEATH OF MIKE MCGUIRE.

Now, Mike McGuire was a hunter bold,
A cracking good shot was he;
And I'm going to tell you how he died
In the year of eighty three,
For the hunting of elk is not all fun,
And any fool may know—
With an angry buck and an empty gun
Your blood may be spilt in the snow!
And Mike was a careless "son-of-a-moose"
Who lived in a shanty forlorn,
Of logs and sods piled together as rough
As a bush-bird's nest in a thorn.
He hadn't a wife so he hadn't a kid—
Only deer-dogs, one, two, three,
And of all the shacks I ever was in
'Twas the meanest I ever did see.
The quilt on the bed was a grey wolf hide;
The carpet a cat-a-mount skin,
And his only pal that ever I saw
Was a black cat gaunt and thin.
And never a steed in his stable stood
Save a cayuse lean and old.
Which trailed his sled to the distant town,
When venison or hides he sold.
He lived alone on the mountain side,
An outcast from all mankind;
And his only aim or object in life
Was to harry the stag and the hind.

So he went out hunting on Christmas Day,
Like a wandering hawk of the wild—
And little he recked of the goring horns
Which the snow with his blood defiled.
For the Fates had woven a woeful web
That Christmas for Mike McGuire,
And before nightfall his broken bones
Were trampled in the snow and the mire!
And no one saw—they could only guess
How the stag hurled him up on high
To fall in the forest a shapeless mass,
Where the wolves his dirge did cry.





Thanksgiving

When the harvest moon like a ball of fire
Glow in the eastern sky,
And the whirr and the rattle of binders
Is borne on the night wind's sigh,
When stooks like mighty armies
Of golden stubbles stand,
And the wings of the harvest goddess
O'ershadow our prairie land;
When the hand of a bountiful Providence
Has turned the frost aside,
And our grain fields have lain in safety
Out of the hailstorm's stride;
When wheat and oats and barley
Are hard and firm in the sheaf,
And bushels mount into millions
Countless beyond belief,
Then to our Father in Heaven
In gratitude we cry,
Sending our hymn of Thanksgiving
Up to the fair blue sky.



The *LOST* CHILDREN of YELLOWGRASS

Sometimes at night, with bright stars twinkling me above
And pondering on the fact that God is love.

I often wonder how it came to pass

Some years ago up west at Yellow Grass.

He let two little toddling bright haired babies,
Wander out over his green sunlit prairies.

To pass the sunny summer morning hours,

In gathering gaudy, bright hued flowers.

And watching butterflies and buzzing bees,

Or e'en perchance repeating tiny prayers upon their knees.

Until night came and they no home had found,

But wandered ever round and round and round.

Wild eyed in terror at the lightning's flash,

While on their shivering forms cold rain did splash.

And at them glared the she coyote with glistening fangs,

Growing unto herself—Mine! Mine thro' hunger's pangs.

To-morrow or the next day it may be!

My lusty cubs shall feast on them in wolfish glee.

Revening those of mine who their man. father with poison
slew,

Or with unerring bullets their brains pierced through.

I need not kill them, I have but to wait—

The arrows of their destiny and fate—

Next morn 'above them soared the black vulture hearing
... their sad moans,
And greedily awaiting their dead bones—
So thus they wandered 'round in cruel pain,
Until God took unto himself their souls again.
Because borne on by Fate's relentless tide,
They there, with bitter hunger starved and died.
And so for them no funeral prayers were said,
~~Because none knew, were they alive or dead.~~
Until months later, a Ranchman driving cows,
Saw one who mid some sunflowers did browse.
And as our prairie cattle will, chewed a small bone,
Still when the herd passed on staying there alone,
Until the cowboy coming back with oaths upon his bearded
lips,
Because on some strange thing his broncho trips.
And that the wilful cow her bone still mumbles,
Dismounts, to see what's there and stumbles;
Across a tress of golden human hair,
And there bethinks him of those children fair.
Who from their homes had wandered far away,
Until Death's angel made their little weary feet to stay.
Where coiling rattlesnakes about them played.
And wolves and buzzards on their bones had preyed.
Until their skeletons with snow and sun bleached bright,
And e'en a meadow lark did nest mid their bones white.
One polished skull with woven grasses filling full,
Her doorway made by hoof of trampling bull!—
So cruelly, they joined the army of the dead,
And yet your heavenly father loved them it is said.



THE BALLAD OF VINCENT WELLER

THE BALLAD OF VINCENT WEILER.

(A True Story.)

Why rest they on the cold ground
These watchers of the night?
And why on Pembina Hillside
Is their camp fire gleaming bright?
Above them in the hazels
Why lies he ever still?
Nor comes beside the glowing coals
When blows the night wind chill!
Why stirs he not at sunrise?
He must be tired and cold!
And where is now his mother?
That his lips they kiss the mould!
Why should he rise, my Masters?
He hath lain the winter long
While loudly bayed the gray wolf
And the blizzard blew full strong!
See the black eagle sailing
His prostrate form above!
What brought him there? I pray you!
A brother's hand? In love?
The weasels closed his eyelids,
And the horned owl sang his dirge.
Down in the lonely valley
Beneath the mountain verge
The snow had not yet fallen,
And autumn leaves lay brown
Under the balm of Gilead,
Where his murderer cast him down!



The Art Model

He's sitting in the model's seat
Tired and thin and pale:
He has struggled in life's battle,
But it's been without avail.

So he's drifted down to deadrock,
And has got to earn his bread,
But his hands and eyes are useless—
So he c'en must use his head.

And it's being put on paper
By novices in art;
That some day they'll be famous
I wish with all my heart.



Lilies

Consider the lilies how they grow—
Purple, crimson and scarlet,
Painted with all royal colors of this earth below,
Or else gold-hearted.
With petals white as snow—
A type of angel purity
Such as frail man can never know.
And Christ has taught us
That all earthly looms
May never wear such glorious apparel
As on their fragile petals blooms.



JIM CROW

Jim Crow he was a raven black,
The plaguey pet of a prairie shack:
I've lost my knife, I heard one say,
Two dollars for it I did pay;
My 'bacco plug, where has it gone,
I left it here this bench upon.
My pince-nez, where have you it hid,
You're getting quite too playful, Kid;
Oh cheese it now! Your joke it's tough,
I want to read! Outside it's rough.
My spoons! My spoons! the cook he cries,
They've gone from underneath my eyes!
My needle and my ball of twine
Are lost, I heard another whine.
And so things went from day to day,
Each thought the other should him pay.
Outside, upon a piled up log,
I see the raven dance a clog.
And what's below? Ah! Lots of things!
Tobacco! Knives! Forks! Watches! Rings!
Thou shalt not steal, the Bible said,
That Devil Bird! Chop off his head!

THE C. P. R. BOOK AGENT.



He's fruit and daily papers,
All sorts of magazines,
Light literature, new novels,—
And photographic scenes.

It's miles from here to Brandon,
You can't sleep all the time;
And he's got "Prairie Patchwork"
The very latest rhyme.

You needn't be particular,
He's nothing but the best,
As everyone will tell you,
Who has traveled thro' the West.

EMPLOYMENT OFFICE



The Hobo

With his lazy feet and his thirsty mouth,
In the month of September he comes from the South.
Looking for work while not wanting to get it,
A vagabond he, with very bad credit.
He chews and he spits, he swears and he drinks,
About his next lodging but little he thinks.
He'll work if you watch him, he'll sleep if you don't,
For to willingly labor he never was wont.
His speech is filthy, his oaths they are black,
He's the scummiest scum of the Pariah pack.
But give him a chance for like you he'd a mother,
Remember he's human; a man and brother.



(With apologies to the shade of Dr Drummond.)

He's plaintee lazee fellow
An' he nevare work, ba Gosh!
Howevare can he do eet
When he alway write de bosh!
Sing about de reever!
Sing about de cow!
W'en he walk upon de prairie
Got to mak' a row.
Sing about de widow
W'at stitch de crazee quilt,
Sing about de milk
W'at de peeg hecm got spilt.
Go to hoe de taters
Seet down in de row,
Dose weeds dey will got killed
W'en dey buried up wit snow.

Com' to my threshin'
Poot heem on de stack
I laff to see his face
Get so dirtee an' so black.
He lazee as sin
'Bout me mak' de rhyam,
Chaff eet, heem choke,—
Get laf dis tam.
Got heem picture taken
Ridin' on de bull,—
Aint afraid of notings
W'en wit whisky leetle full.
He lazee, lazee fellow
And he nevare work, ba Gosh!
But he no too bad a fellow
An' we lak to hear dat bosh.



